A Quick Guide to Twitter in the NHS and Social Care

"Twitter and social media is changing healthcare. It's a very significant tool that we have to use now."
Prof Juliet Beal, Director of Nursing, Quality Improvement and Care
NHS England

Healthcare Conferences UK believes that extending the conference discussion, and sharing the learning beyond the delegates in the room is essential to encourage best practice and improve patient care across the NHS and Social Care. Every conference we run will have a twitter hashtag which will enable you, and others with similar interests not attending to contribute your views, and discuss the developments within the conference subject area. Also with current NHS training budgets being limited you can also join in discussion, download and learn from presentations at conferences that you may not have the budget or time to attend. You don’t have to tweet (although it’s great if you do), you can use twitter just as an information source. We have set up this guide below to help you get started on twitter

**Setting up your Twitter account (twitter is free)** Go to [http://twitter.com](http://twitter.com)

Click new to twitter – sign up now – the below screen will appear - complete all details and you will be asked to confirm your email (an email will be sent to you)
Every twitter user has a “Handle” or “username” which begins with @ - this is essentially your nickname on twitter and what you will be known by – there is a maximum character limit of 15 characters – this can describe your role rather than your name. Think about this name as this is what you will be known by on twitter. You then have to add your real name and a short description. You can also include a photo (of yourself or anything you like). Note many people in the NHS state in their description also state that their tweets represent their own views only.

- You can list your real name in your profile to provide more information to your followers.
- Adding underscores before or after your desired username will help you claim a unique handle on Twitter.

If you get stuck there are instructions here https://support.twitter.com/groups/50-welcome-to-twitter#topic_204

Examples of twitter handles (red), real names (green) and descriptions (blue) to give you some ideas:

**Clare Gallagher**
@HCUK_Clare
Clare Gallagher Owner/MD Healthcare Conferences UK writes #conference programmes, manages company, passionate for #quality in #NHS, busy working mum four kids
London, www.healthcareconferencesuk.co.uk

**Alastair McLellan**
@HSJEditor
I am the editor of Health Service Journal - the UK's leading health policy, leadership and management title.
Retweeting does not mean agreement.
London · hsj.co.uk

**Jane Cummings**
@JaneMCummings
I am the Chief Nursing Officer for England based in the NHS Commissioning Board

**Julie Bailey**
@curetheNHS
Founder of Cure the NHS, campaign group who campaigned for the Mid Staffs public inquiry into the disaster at Mid Staffs FT Hospital.
Stafford · curethenhs.co.uk

Once you’ve decided your username you can then fill in your details and descriptions.
Your twitter profile page should look something like this
HASHTAGS

You will notice that some people use # in front of words on Twitter. This is called a hashtag and is used to make a word more searchable. People use the hashtag symbol # before a relevant keyword or phrase (no spaces) in their Tweet to categorize those Tweets and help them show more easily in Twitter Search. Clicking on a hashtagged word in any message shows you all other Tweets marked with that keyword. Hashtags can occur anywhere in the Tweet – at the beginning, middle, or end. Hashtagged words that become very popular are often Trending Topics.

For example we use hashtags for all our conferences – if you tweet about a conference you are at include the hashtag in the tweet then when people search that hashtag they will see all the tweets relevant to that conference. And if you want to see everything that was said about an event you can search the hashtag and all the conversations will appear. Below are some tweets from our #NursingRevalidation Conference:

- **HCUK Clare** @HCUK_Clare
  
  Great entertaining role play session on nurse appraisal from Playouts @DavidCSchaal #nursevalidation pic.twitter.com/SKEF80ByfP

- **paul jebb** @pauljebb
  
  We need to build the #6Cs into appraisal says @pauljebb1 @6Cslive inursevalidation @wennurses pic.twitter.com/1VzGW7HMY @JaneMCummings

- **Independent Nurse** @IndyNurseMag
  
  @pauljebb1 'we need to dispel the myths of what nursing really is' #nursevalidation

- **Carolyn Goodbody** @HCUK_Carolyn
  
  Great full exhibition at Nursing Appraisal & Revalidation today ow.ly/gktrS #nursevalidation @MiadlUK @PebblePad @FoNCharity

- **The NMC** @nmconews
  
  @JackieSmith_nmc is speaking at the Nursing Appraisal and
Sending tweets

Type your Tweet into the box on the left side of your screen, or click the blue compose new Tweet button in the top navigation bar. It looks like a feather.

Your tweet must be no more than 140 characters – anything else will not be shown on the tweet.

Click the Tweet button to post the Tweet to your profile. You will immediately see your Tweet in the timeline on your homepage. Any of your followers will also see the tweet.

At the start you will have no followers so that take the pressure off as if you do something wrong no one is likely to see it!

Your tweet would often include a hashtagged word which is the keyword that people would search for to find your tweet (see above examples). If you want to highlight a tweet to a specific person you use their username eg @HCUK_Clare – this person will then get notification that they have been mentioned in a tweet.

You can also reply (which goes on your twitter feed) or direct message (which is private) to any tweet you have seen.

Twitter vocabulary

RT – if you see this at the beginning of a tweet it means it is a re-tweet ie that someone else wrote it and the current person has re tweeted it so their followers can also see it. If you see something that you think your followers would be interested in then you can press the retweet button to share it on your timeline. To get retweets if you add in relevant usernames at the end of your tweet you are highlighting the tweet to them in the hope that they will retweet.

MT - Similar to RT, an abbreviation for "Modified Tweet." Placed before the retweeted text when users manually retweet a message with modifications, for example shortening a Tweet.

Shrinking URLs

If you would like to share a web address within a tweet as you only have 140 characters its helpful to shrink it – there are a number of websites that do this. We use www.hootsuite.com which is free to use and also provides easy summaries of your twitter streams. Generally its not a good idea to put websites at the end of your tweet as if it gets retweeted they will fall off!

How to find and follow people

When you follow someone their tweets will appear on your homepage. To find people, you can search for people by name, @username or organisation. You can search for subject areas using #keywords. If you click on discover twitter will also suggest people to follow based on who you are currently following. You can look at who other people follow and who follow them. When you find someone that you want to follow you just click follow. If you change your mind afterwards hover over the button and click unfollow.
How to increase your followers

There are whole companies and websites dedicated to increasing your followers, you can even advertise on twitter but generally if you follow someone they often follow back, and if you send interesting tweets then people will follow you. It takes time but it will grow.

There are lots of other things you can do on twitter - eg customising your profile, sharing pictures and videos – more instructions here
https://support.twitter.com/groups/50-welcome-to-twitter#topic_204

Word of warning
Remember twitter is a public forum – never tweet anything that you wouldn’t want your boss, patient or friends to see.

To get you started you might like to follow:
@HCUK_Clare Clare Gallagher, MD of Healthcare Conferences – tweets news and updates from our healthcare conferences
@SCUK_Kerry Kerry Tarrant, Social Care Conferences – tweets news and updates from our social care conferences

Organisations
@HQIP Healthcare Quality Improvement Partnership
@NHSEngland NHS England
@hscie Health and Social Care Information Centre
@WeNurses one of the most active nursing communities on twitter
@RCPLondon Royal College of Physicians, London
@CareQualityComm The Care Quality Commission
@CQCPProf Care Quality Commission Professionals Network
@DHgovuk Department of Health
@RCPsych Royal College of Psychiatrists
@6Cslive NHS Englands 6C’s Nursing
@acutemedicine The Society for Acute Medicine
@NHSIQ NHS Improving Quality
@RCGP Royal College of GPs
@wepharmacists pharmacy community on twitter
@TheRCN Royal College of Nursing
@NICEcomms NICE

Individuals
@Jeremy_Hunt Jeremy Hunt, Secretary of State for Health
@DrBruceKeogh Bruce Keogh Medical Director of NHS
@JaneMCummings Jane Cummings Chief Nursing Officer of NHS
@HSJEditor Editor of the Health Service Journal Alastair McLennan
@ClareRCGP Clare Gerada, President, Royal College of GPs

Individuals speaking at the HCUK twitter conference:
@CRoseveare Dr Chris Roseveare Society for Acute Medicine
@anniecoops Annie Cooper Clinical Informatics Advisor (nursing) NHS England
@DrMarkNewbold Chief Executive Heart of England NHS Foundation Trust
@DrUmeshPrabhu Medical Director Wrightington Wigan and Leigh NHS Foundation Trust
@pauljebb1 Assistant Director of Nursing, Blackpool Teaching Hospitals
Most of our speakers have accounts – just search by name

Any questions email me Clare@hc-uk.org.uk Good luck on twitter

Clare, Clare Gallagher
Managing Director & Programme Producer
Healthcare Conferences UK

The HSJ 2012 17 most influential leaders on twitter
The 17 leaders, in the order in which they appear in the HSJ100, are:

1. Tim Kelsey, national director for patients and information, NHS Commissioning Board: @tkelsey1
2. Andy Burnham, shadow secretary of state for health, Labour Party: @andyburnhammp
3. Dean Royles, director, NHS Employers: @NHSE_Dean
4. Dr Clare Gerada, chair, RCGP: @clarercgp
5. Ciarán Devane, chief executive, Macmillan Cancer Support: @ciarandevane
6. Professor Steve Field, deputy national medical director, responsible for inequalities, NHS Commissioning Board: @ProfSteveField
7. Professor Chris Ham, chief executive, The King’s Fund: @profchrisham
8. Stephen Thornton, deputy chair, Monitor and chief executive, The Health Foundation: @THFstephen
9. Dr Johnny Marshall, interim partnership development director, NHS Clinical Commissioners: @marshall_johnny
10. Liz Kendall, shadow minister for care and older people, Labour Party: @leisterliz
11. Professor John Appleby, chief economist, The King’s Fund: @jappleby123
12. Dr Martin McShane, director for ‘Domain Two’ (long term conditions), NHS Commissioning Board: @docmdmartin
13. Stephen Dunn, director of development and delivery, NHS Trust Development Authority: @Stephen_P_Dunn
14. Jeremy Taylor, chief executive, National Voices: @JeremyTaylorNV
15. Anna Dixon, director of policy, The King’s Fund: @DrAnnaDixon
16. Dr Mark Newbold, chief executive, Heart of England Foundation Trust: @drmarknewbold
17. Nigel Edwards, senior fellow, The King’s Fund: @nedwards_1

Useful resources
Social Media Guide for Chief Executives produced by NHS Employers

How the NHS uses twitter – Guardian Article
Social Media Toolkit for the NHS
NHS Employers has launched a social media toolkit for the NHS.

Using Social Media to engage listen and learn – guide for CCGs

HR and Social Media in the NHS
http://www.nhsemployers.org/Aboutus/Publications/Documents/HR-social-media-NHS.pdf